June 17, 1988

Joel Berez
President
Infocom, Inc.
125 Cambridge Park Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

Dear Joel:

Enclosed is the proposed outline of our third game. The game currently has no title, but it is to be a parody of the movie "The Wizard of Oz." The goal is to produce a hilarious and wacky, off-the-wall comedy.

The underpinnings of the game rely on the same principle as the other games in the "Immortal Legends" series. It deals with a character who is already firmly established in the popular mind, who comes complete with an already-identified supporting cast, and whose actions take place in an evocative environment.

The subject matter is delicate in that the treatment must be wacky enough to be genuinely enjoyable, but not so satirical or biting that it creates a negative reaction. I think that your people have good radar in this area, and that our relationship with them is close enough to keep the game on the right track.

I look forward to hearing your reactions as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Bates
President

cc: Jon Palace
Mike Dornbrook
Stu Galley

Program Description - Program III

OZ

Plot Notes

The game opens with the player, Dorothy, on her farm in

Kansas. Dorothy's daily routine is dull, tedious and degrading. Every five moves or so, the game hauls her away from whatever she is doing to muck out the horse stall, shovel the droppings out of the goat pen, scrub the floor of the chicken coop, or clean out the privy.

Needless to say, Dorothy is eager to get away from all this. So eager, in fact, that for the rest of the game, a "jigs-up" results not in death, but a fate worse than death - a return to her odiferous duties at the farm.

Dorothy leaves the farm and comes across Professor Marvel. He offers her various snake-oil products, and one in particular catches her eye. He sees this and touts it to her, saying, "What do you do when you've got to go to school but there's a test you haven't studied for? It's no use hoping for a snow storm. Why, what you need is 'Tornado-in-a-Bottle.' Just open up this little fella and you'll have a Texas twister faster than you can say atmospheric disturbance. But when you open the bottle, be careful where you stand. I guarantee that as soon as you release it, that tornado will head right for the nearest mobile home park."

Dorothy buys the bottle, Toto bites Marvel on the ankle, and the enraged professor chases them back to her house where she opens the bottle. The ensuing tornado whisks her and Toto off to Oz. Dorothy has to steer the house as it falls so that it lands on the Wicked Witch of the East. But the Oz they land in is different from the one we are used to. It is more like Southern California - sort of Oz-gone-commercial. You can buy Oz-burgers and Oz-dogs at fast-food stands; bumper stickers say "I (heart) Oz" and "Honk if you like Glinda." The Munchkins talk in Valley-girl-speak, fer sure.

Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, floats in on a bubble and says, "Now that you have killed the Wicked Witch of the East, the only evil person left in Oz is the Wicked Witch of the West. Of course, there is the Fairly Bad Witch of the North-by-northwest, but she's getting old and doesn't amount to much."

Glinda keeps the ruby slippers for herself, giving Dorothy instead the striped socks that the dead witch was wearing. "Don't take them off," Glinda says. "The longer you wear them, the more powerful they will become."

Then Glinda says that although Dorothy has done everyone a good service by dropping a house on the wicked witch, still, she did break the law in doing so. She's guilty not only of witch-slaughter, but of flying without a pilot's license,

littering, and re-locating a residential structure without filing an environmental impact study.

Glinda thinks about a punishment for Dorothy. She considers making her play a year in the Munchkin NBA, or locking her in a small room with an Oz-way distributor. But she finally decides that only the Wizard of Oz can choose the appropriate punishment, so she selects a "trial date" and says that Dorothy must appear before Oz by then. If Dorothy fails to get to the Emerald City by the appointed time, she gets sent back to Kansas.

Once Glinda has pronounced sentence she says, "I'm sorry, I have to go now. The next bubble is coming, and if I miss it there won't be another one along for 2 hours. Service has gotten so poor since the budget cuts." She floats out of sight.

When Dorothy starts off down the yellow brick road, she quickly comes to a crossroads. The direction she chooses determines which of her companions she will meet first. (This should help reduce some of the linearity of the game)

Each of the people she comes to decides to join her in her journey. Each of them wants something from the wizard. The possibilities for the scarecrow include:

1) He's tired of being unable to do his job because he has no brains, and so what he wants is a new job that doesn't require brains - such as politician, clerk at the department of motor vehicles, or senior executive at a large corporation.

2) He's afraid the farmers will get mad at him for not being able to scare away the crows, and so what he wants is liability insurance (which, being a con man, Oz will be only too happy to sell him).

When Dorothy finds the tin man, she also has to find the oil can and oil him down. Once she does this she discovers that either:

1) He thinks of himself as a walking lightning rod, and what he really wants are rubber galoshes for insulation.

2) He wants to be Ziebarted (rust-proofed).

The lion could

1) Be an effeminate character whose burning desire in life is to get a species-change operation. "Inside me there is a gentle lamb just waiting to get out. A few hours on the table, and a couple weeks in the Bahamas, and I'll be a new creature."

2) Be a hypochondriac who is afraid that eating raw meat every day is too unhealthy. What he wants from the wizard is either a barbecue grill, 10 hours of psycho-analysis to get over his fears, or a good diet program.

The four of them (five, counting Toto) start off for Oz. Along the way, they have to survive the poppy field, deal with the flying monkeys, gain entrance to the castle of the Wicked Witch of the West, and kill her.

Once they have killed the witch, they gain entrance to Emerald City and have their audience with Oz. They discover the wizard is a fraud. The wizard gives each of Dorothy's companions some totally useless object that he claims will solve each of their problems. He then sneaks off without helping Dorothy at all. Glinda floats in on the 7:28 bubble and says that Dorothy could have used her socks all along to get what she wanted. (How, I'm not yet sure, because I'm not yet sure what will represent success for Dorothy.) Dorothy follows Glinda's instructions and wins the game.

## Alternative Possibilities

The following are a couple of even more off-the-wall ideas, which may be worth incorporating into the above story, or developing on their own.

### LEATHER GODDESS OF OZ

Essentially the same story as above, but with more suggestive language, racier insinuations, and a sub-stratum of sex running throughout. We could substitute a whip for the striped socks and dress Dorothy in leather.

### ASSAULT ON OZ

Dorothy arrives in Oz and learns either that

1) The wicked witch is holding the wizard captive or,

2) The wizard is a drug kingpin (he controls the poppy fields) who is a tyrannical despot and who has enslaved the inhabitants of Emerald City.

In either case, Dorothy assembles her swat team. The tin man is a hopeless-romantic ex-mercenary, like Rick in Casablanca. He handles infiltration and reconnaissance. The scarecrow is a Marxist radical intellectual who is also an expert in communications. The lion is a wild-eyed extremist who specializes in explosives & demolitions.

In the course of this action-packed adventure game, they collect the various items they need to assault the fortress, including plastic explosives, blasting caps, a grappling hook, gun, radio, etc.

The game culminates with the storming of the fortress and either the release of the wizard, (scenario 1) or his downfall (scenario 2).

## MOVIE WITHIN A GAME

The game would as described in the main proposal. But at some point soon after Dorothy gets to Oz, the player learns that the people in the game - including Dorothy - have a dual reality. They are not only characters within the story, but also actors playing those characters.

This could be used sparingly - just a few scattered complaints about how hot the make-up is under the lights, for example - or we could make the whole game a dual-level experience, with separate puzzles for each level and a final victory that cannot be achieved unless all the puzzles in both levels have been completed.

This approach has some very practical uses.

1) Default winner handlers:

   Wicked Witch of the West: "Forget it, kid. I just get paid to laugh maniacally and give you a hard time."

   Auntie Em and Uncle Henry: "I'm sorry, honey. We do love you, but they made us such bland, boring characters that we can't do anything but say we love you."

2) Responding to reasonable inputs that the author doesn't want to handle:

   The Director yells, "Cut! Dorry...Baby. We can't have you doing that, OK honey? I know the script calls for you to improvise, but L.B. would go nuts over the figures if we tried to include everything in the budget. So be a doll, OK? Stick to what's reasonable."

3) Limiting the amount of "game damage" that can be done with certain objects. If a player acquires a certain object in the game and decides to return to a previous location to try to use it, then the Director can yell,

   "Cut! Look, honey. We've already struck that set. I know no one told you, but we're trying to save a few bucks, OK? Look at it this way: on the one hand, you can't go back. But on the other hand, you don't need to. So whaddya say. Let's go with the flow. Roll 'em!"

4) The Director can also be used as the hint giver.

"Well, kid. We really want you to improvise. But we are over budget and behind schedule, so I guess it wouldn't hurt to give you a little push in the right direction."

If we pursue this option, the Director would inform Dorothy at the beginning that he wants her to improvise the script as she goes along. We need to have him encourage improvisation so that the player doesn't get the sense that there is only one way to do things.

If the two-level game is rejected as too complicated, it still might be interesting at the end of a one-level game to have a Director yell, "Cut! That's a wrap. Good job, people. The movie will hit the theaters in six months."